

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Lutheran Social Services, VI

Application ID: 13TT147043

Program Name: Project Reach Lutheran Social Services

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

- (+) The applicant organization clearly describes the need among its target population as it relates to economic disadvantages. The applicant supports that targeted regions have very recently experienced major employment cuts including the HOVENSA Oil Refinery, who announced their intent to close the refinery by April 24, 2012, after which they dismissed 2,150 employees and sub-contractors.
- (+) The applicant further details economic hardship by providing a discussion of employment rates in that the overall unemployment rate in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) reached 13.3% with 17% on St. Croix and 9.9% on St. Thomas and St. John combined compared to the U.S. unemployment rate of 7.8%. Additional statistics are provided for individuals living below the poverty line.
- (+) The applicant organization further supports its reasoning for targeting natives within its target area. For example, a discussion supports that children affected by maltreatment, abuse, and neglect represents a rate of 11.4 per 1,000 children as compared to the national rate of 10.3 per 1,000 children.
- (+) The applicant organization provides a thorough description of its leadership and those that will preside over programs and various functions.
- (+) The applicant organization thoroughly describes its plans to leverage AmeriCorps Members to support their mission and oversee functionality of its proposed program. The applicant proposes that 24 AmeriCorps members will invest a year of full-time service to the residents and clients of Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands on the islands of St. Croix and St. Thomas.
- (+) The applicant organization clearly lists the responsibilities for Members such as providing 24-hour care to children that have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect; assist low income senior citizens and adults with disabilities; and serve adults with disabilities to reach their highest attainable level of independence.
- (+) The applicant organization's description of its program design features an in-depth discussion for how the

program will perform and generate community input to support activities. The applicant specifically addresses what roles Members will hold.

(+) The applicant provides examples of the positive impact that AmeriCorps members will receive from the experience since most will be under-educated and unemployed or under-employed and participation will allow for training and employment opportunities.

(-) The applicant organization does not clearly describe how it will measure program effectiveness. Further, there is limited discussion to describe how outreach will be conducted and how it is prepared to leverage partners, measure the impact, and improve member training experiences.

(-) The applicant organization does not provide a clear description for how its proposed intervention will have measurable impact. For example, the applicant provides a discussion for a previous implemented program but apologizes for a flaw in the data collection effort due to intra-organizational disruptions: “We regret to report that we did not enroll 100% of the Members within 30 days for the 2011 and 2012 terms. This was due to not securing new Members to fill our openings on time in 2011 and from having some technical difficulties with some of the Members in 2012.”

(-) It is unclear as to how the applicant will show the overall impact of the program or how it will be measured.

(-) The applicant lacks a clear evidence-based or evidence-informed measurement of the overall impact of the program upon underachieving students and disabled seniors and the community at the end of the three- year grant cycle, other than surveys attendance logs, and self-reporting. For example, a behavior modification intervention to improve school attendance rates of children in the Queen Louise Home for Children will be implemented by the AmeriCorps member Cottage Parents, but there is a lack of expected improvement in attendance as a result of the interventions.

(-) The applicant does not demonstrate that the AmeriCorps members are engaged in either evidence-based or evidence-informed activities because the applicant does not describe how the Member activities are evidence-based/evidence-informed and does not reference sources of activities as evidence-based/evidence-informed.